



Qatar

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2000](#)

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
February 23, 2001

Qatar, an Arab state on the Persian Gulf, is a monarchy with no constitution or political parties. Qatar is governed by the ruling Al-Thani family through its head, the Amir. The current Amir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, took power from his father in June 1995 with the support of leading branches of the Al-Thani family, and in consultation with other leading Qatari families. This transition of authority did not represent a change in the basic governing order. The Amir holds absolute power, the exercise of which is influenced by religious law, consultation with leading citizens, rule by consensus, and the right of any citizen to gain access to the Amir to appeal government decisions. The Amir generally legislates after consultation with leading citizens, an arrangement institutionalized in an appointed advisory council that assists the Amir in formulating policy. In 1999 the Amir convened a constitutional committee to draft a permanent constitution that would provide for parliamentary elections. The committee has met regularly and is projected to complete its recommendations by 2002. In March 1999, citizens were permitted to participate in the election of a national body, the Central Municipal Council, for the first time. The judiciary is nominally independent, but most judges hold their positions at the Government's pleasure.

The country has efficient police and security services. The civilian security force, controlled by the Interior Ministry, comprises two sections: The police and the General Administration of Public Security and the investigatory police (Mubahathat), which is responsible for sedition and espionage cases. The Interior Ministry has a special state security investigative unit (Mubahith) that performs internal security investigations and gathers intelligence. In addition, there is an independent civilian intelligence service (Mukhabarat). There were one or two allegations that members of the security forces tortured civilians in detention.

The State owns most basic industries and services, but the retail and construction industries are in private hands. Oil is the principal natural resource, but the country's extensive natural gas resources are playing an increasingly important role. Rapid development in the 1970's and 1980's created an economy in which foreign workers, mostly South Asian and Arab, outnumber citizens by a ratio of 4 or 5 to 1. The Government has embarked on a program of "Qatarization," which is aimed at reducing the number of foreign workers. Many government jobs are offered only to citizens and private sector businesses are encouraged to recruit citizens as well.

The Government generally respected its citizens' human rights in many areas, and there were improvements in freedom of expression; however, its record was poor in areas, such as citizens' right to change the Government. Citizens do not have the right to change their government. There were one or two allegations that members of the security forces tortured civilians in detention during the year. Arbitrary detention in security cases, and restrictions on the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and on workers' rights, continued to be problems. However, the Government continued to take some steps to ease restrictions on the practice of non-Muslim religions. Despite female suffrage, in practice women's rights are restricted by social customs. Domestic servants are mistreated and sometimes abused. Noncitizens, who make up the majority of the residents of the country, face discrimination in the workplace.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Political and Other Extrajudicial Killing

There were no reports of political or other extrajudicial killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The Government officially proscribes torture; however, there were one or two reports of alleged torture. There were unconfirmed allegations in previous years that some of the defendants in the trial of the 1996 coup plotters (see Sections 1.d. and 1.e.) had been tortured while in police custody; government officials have denied the allegations. The Government administers most corporal punishment prescribed by Islamic law but does not allow amputation.

Prison conditions generally meet minimum international standards.

The Government does not permit domestic human rights groups to exist, and no international human rights organization has asked to visit the country or its prisons.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest; however, the police have the discretion to arrest persons based on a low level of suspicion, and arbitrary detention in security cases remains a problem. The authorities generally charge suspects within 48 hours. Suspects generally are presented to the Attorney General within 24 hours of arrest. The Attorney General decides whether to hold the suspect up to a maximum of 4 days, after which time the suspect is presented before a judge, who may order the suspect released or remanded to custody to await trial. The accused is entitled to legal representation throughout this process. Suspects who are detained in security cases generally are afforded access to counsel; however, they may be detained indefinitely while under investigation. There were no known cases of incommunicado detention during the year.

In 1998 Ministry of Education official Abdulrahman Al-Nuaimi distributed a letter criticizing the Amir's decision to allow women to vote and run for office in the Municipal Council elections as well as other purportedly anti-Islamic actions. The Amir ordered the arrest of Abdulrahman Al-Nuaimi, and he remains in detention.

In September 33 of the persons arrested and tried for involvement in a February 1996 coup attempt, including Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, who was named as the prime suspect in the coup bid, were found guilty and sentence to life in prison; 85 were acquitted. The 33 found guilty have appealed. Prosecutors had called for the death penalty for all those accused.

The Government has used forced exile on rare occasions. There were no reported cases this year.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The judiciary is nominally independent; however, most judges are foreign nationals who hold residence permits granted by the civil authorities, and thus hold their positions at the Government's pleasure. The number of citizen judges is increasing.

The judiciary deals with the bureaucracies of three ministries. Civil (or Adlea) courts are subordinate to the Ministry of Justice, and Shari'a (Islamic law) courts fall under the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs. The prosecutors fall under the Ministry of Interior.

There are two types of courts: The civil courts, which have jurisdiction in civil and commercial matters, and the Shari'a courts, which have jurisdiction in family and criminal cases. There are no permanent state security courts; however, although there have been no cases before these courts since the Amir assumed power, they have not been abolished formally by law and remain an option. Defendants tried by all courts have the right to appeal. The original case and the appeal in Shari'a courts are no longer heard by the same judge, and procedural loopholes that permitted this practice in the past are to be closed as part of a pending judicial reform package.

The legal system is biased in favor of citizens and the Government. A Muslim litigant may request the Shari'a courts to assume jurisdiction in commercial or civil cases. Non-Muslims are not allowed to bring suits as plaintiffs in the Shari'a courts; however, they may file suit in the civil courts. This practice prevents non-Muslim

residents from obtaining full legal recourse. Trials in the civil courts are public, but in the Shari'a courts only the disputing parties, their relatives, associates, and witnesses are allowed in the courtroom. Lawyers do not play a formal role except to prepare litigants for their cases. Although non-Arabic speakers are provided with interpreters, foreigners are disadvantaged, especially in cases involving the performance of contracts. However, provided that the foreign defendant's sponsor or embassy agree, the defendant is entitled to legal representation throughout the trial and pretrial process.

Defendants appear before a judge for a preliminary hearing within 7 days of their arrest. Judges may extend pretrial detention for 1 week at a time to allow the authorities to conduct investigations. Lengthy pretrial detention is not known to occur. Defendants in the civil courts have the right to be represented by defense attorneys but are not always permitted to be represented by counsel in the Shari'a courts.

Shari'a trials usually are brief. Shari'a family law trials often are held without counsel. After both parties have stated their cases and examined witnesses, judges usually deliver a verdict after a short deliberation. Criminal cases normally are tried within 2 to 3 months after suspects are detained. Suspects are entitled to bail, except in some instances, such as in cases of violent crime. Bail may be provided by citizens or noncitizens. Foreigners who are charged with minor crimes may be released to a citizen sponsor. They are prohibited from departing the country until the case is resolved.

After a public trial of persons arrested for involvement in the 1996 coup attempt, trial judges sentenced 33 defendants to life imprisonment. Nine of them were tried in absentia. Another 85 defendants were acquitted on all charges. A decision regarding the convicted defendants' appeal was pending at year's end. The trial was considered fair.

There are no known political prisoners.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

Traditional attitudes of respect for the sanctity of the home and the privacy of women provide a great deal of protection against arbitrary intrusion for most citizens and residents. A warrant must be obtained before police may search a residence or business, except in cases involving national security or emergencies. Search warrants are issued by judicial authorities. There were no reports of unauthorized searches of homes during the year. The police and security forces are believed to monitor the telephone calls of suspected criminals, of those considered to be security risks, and of selected foreigners.

With prior permission, which is usually granted, citizens may marry foreigners of any nationality and apply for residence permits or citizenship for their spouses.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

Although the Government reduced restrictions on freedom of speech and of the press in 1996 and permitted a noticeable expansion of press freedom, some restrictions still remain. The Government lifted formal censorship of the media in 1995, and since then the press has been essentially free of government interference. However, journalists continue to practice self-censorship, due to real or perceived social and political pressures. Some journalists reportedly were subjected to pressure by the Government during the year after they published articles critical of the Government. Although explicit criticism of citizens' public or private affairs is not common, a number of such reports have been noted in local newspapers, especially Arabic-language newspapers. One Arabic-language newspaper even polled its readers to determine the most popular and least popular ministers. The Minister of Education was a frequent target of criticism; other criticism tended to be targeted at organizations rather than individuals.

There were no reports of instances of political censorship of foreign news media or broadcasts of foreign programs on local television over the past year. The Censorship Office in the Ministry of Information was abolished (together with the Ministry) in 1996. Pornography and expressions deemed hostile to Islam still are subject to censorship, and censors still work at broadcast media under the overall supervision of the Ministry of Religious Endowments.

Citizens enjoy broad freedom of speech but are restricted by the social and family restraints of a very traditional society. There is no apparent fear of government monitoring of private speech. However, the larger foreign population does not believe it enjoys the same freedoms and acts accordingly.

Television and radio are state owned, but the privately owned satellite television channel Al-Jazeera operates freely. During the year, radio and television call-in programs and talk shows criticized the Amir for meeting with the Israeli Prime Minister at the U.N. Millennium Summit in September, and the Government was criticized for allowing the Israeli Trade Office to remain open prior to the November Islamic Summit. Various government ministers are regularly criticized on a popular radio talk show.

A Ministry of Education official who wrote a letter in 1999 critical of the Amir's decision to allow women to vote and run for office in the Municipal Council elections remains in custody (see Section 1.d.).

Customs officials screen imported print media, videocassettes, and other such items for pornography, but have stopped blocking the importation of non-Muslim religious items (see Section 2.c.).

A growing number of citizens and residents have access to the Internet, which is provided through the state-owned telecommunications monopoly. Internet service is censored for pornographic content through a proxy server, which blocks those web sites containing certain key words and phrases. A user who believes that a site is censored mistakenly may submit the web address to the Internet service provider to have the site reviewed for suitability. The Government is responsive to such submissions.

There is no legal provision for academic freedom. Most instructors at the University of Qatar exercise self-censorship.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Government severely limits freedom of assembly. The Government generally does not allow political demonstrations; however, it permitted one peaceful demonstration of about 3,000 participants in October, under the aegis of the Central Municipal Council, that protested the Israeli Government's actions against Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza.

The Government severely limits freedom of association. The Government does not allow political parties or membership in international professional organizations critical of the Government or of any other Arab government. Private social, sports, trade, professional, and cultural societies must be registered with the Government. Security forces monitor the activities of such groups.

c. Freedom of Religion

There is no constitutional protection for freedom of religion. The state religion is Islam, as interpreted by the conservative Wahhabi order of the Sunni branch. The Government officially prohibits public worship by non-Muslims; however, it tolerates and protects services conducted privately with prior notification to the authorities. The Government allows Shi'a Muslims to practice their faith freely; however, community leaders have agreed to refrain from certain public practices, such as self-flagellation.

The Government and ruling family are inextricably linked to the practice of Islam. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs controls the construction of mosques, the administration of clerical affairs, and instruction in the Koran. The Minister of Islamic Affairs is a member of the Emir's cabinet and participates in policymaking at the highest level. The only official government holidays aside from the independence day are the Eid Al-Fitr, following the holy month of Ramadan, and the Eid Al-Adha, which commemorates the end of the Hajj. The Emir participates in widely publicized "Eid prayers" and each year personally finances the Hajj pilgrimages of many who cannot afford to travel to Mecca.

During the year, the Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox churches in effect received de facto official recognition. However, formal recognition apparently has not yet been granted. There reportedly is a verbal commitment by the Government to allow the churches to operate openly in a manner that apparently reflects de facto government recognition. For example, priests of the three churches have been asked to wear their clerical garb and may apply to be sponsors for visitor visas for other church representatives. In addition, church representatives may import reasonable amounts of Bibles and other religious literature for use by their congregations. In February the Government identified a parcel of land on which it plans to allow the construction of three churches, one each for the Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox communities. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture met with diplomats and representatives of the churches to discuss initial design plans. The Government recognizes and allows marriages between non-Muslims to be conducted by the Roman Catholic Church. Such progress for Christians is due, in large part, to their status as "people of the book" in that the Koran accords special status to Christians and Jews. The Government intends to permit Hindus and Buddhists neither to worship openly nor to establish temples because it claims that there is no Koranic justification for tolerance of polytheistic religions.

Non-Muslims may not proselytize, and conversion from Islam is theoretically a capital offense. However, there is no record of an execution for such a conversion since independence in 1971.

The Government formally prohibits the publication, importation, and distribution of Bibles and other non-Islamic religious literature. However, in practice individuals generally are not prevented from importing Bibles and other religious items for personal use. In previous years, there were sporadic reports of confiscation of such materials by customs officials. During the year, some Christian worship groups reported having no trouble importing instructional materials (i.e., Sunday school materials and devotionals) for use by the groups. Police provide traffic control for authorized Catholic masses, which may be attended by 1,000 or more persons at Easter and Christmas.

There are no restrictions on non-Muslims providing religious instruction to their children; however, the public schools provide compulsory instruction in Islam. The public schools generally are closed to foreigners, most of whose children attend private schools.

Practice of Islam confers advantage in civil life. For example, non-Muslims do not have the right to bring suit in the Shari'a (Islamic law) courts. These courts are utilized to settle the majority of civil claims; thus, non-Muslims are at a distinct disadvantage.

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

There are no restrictions on internal travel, except around sensitive military and oil installations. In general, women do not require permission from male guardians to travel. However, men may prevent female relatives from leaving the country by providing their names to immigration officers at ports of departure. Technically, women employed by the Government must obtain official permission to travel abroad when requesting leave, but it is not known to what extent this regulation is enforced. Citizens critical of the Government face restrictions on their right to travel abroad.

All citizens have the right to return. Foreigners are subject to immigration restrictions designed to control the size of the local labor pool. Foreign workers must have the permission of their sponsor (usually their employer) to enter and depart the country, but their dependents may leave the country without restriction. Foreign women who are married to citizens are granted residence permits and may apply for citizenship; however, they are expected to relinquish their foreign citizenship.

The Government has not formulated a formal policy regarding refugees, asylees, or first asylum. Those attempting to enter illegally, including persons seeking asylum from nearby countries, are refused entry. Asylum seekers who are able to obtain local sponsorship or employment are allowed to enter and may remain as long as they are employed.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

Citizens do not have the right to change their government or the political system peacefully. The political institutions combine the characteristics of a traditional Bedouin tribal state and a modern bureaucracy. Under the amended Provisional Constitution, the Amir must be chosen from and by the adult males of the Al-Thani family. There are no political parties or organized opposition groups. However, in 1999 citizens had the opportunity for the first time to choose officials for the Central Municipal Council in free and fair elections.

The Amir exercises most executive and legislative powers, including appointment of cabinet members. On March 8, 1999, citizens elected a 29-member Central Municipal Council. For the first time, men and women age 18 and older were permitted both to vote and to run as candidates. The Council is a nonpartisan body that addresses issues such as street repair, green space, trash collection, and public works projects. Its role is to advise the Minister of Municipalities and Agriculture. The Council cannot change policy on its own.

In November 1998, the Amir announced his intention to form a constitutional committee to draft a permanent constitution that would provide for democratic parliamentary elections. The constitutional committee was inaugurated in July 1999 and includes a number of government officials, academics, and prominent business leaders. In addition to subcommittees on the legislature, executive, and judiciary, it includes a subcommittee on human rights. The committee has met regularly and is projected to complete its recommendations by 2002. The Amir reiterated in his remarks to the committee members that he expects their efforts to lead to the establishment of an elected parliamentary body.

Women are underrepresented in government and politics. Women have the right to vote and run as candidates for the Central Municipal Council; none were elected to the Council in the 1999 elections.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

The Government does not permit local human rights organizations to exist. No international human rights organizations are known to have asked to investigate conditions in the country. However, Amnesty International and foreign embassies were invited to send observers to sessions of the public trial of those accused in the 1996 coup attempt. Foreign observers attended the trial sessions held during the year.

Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Religion, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The law proscribes discrimination in the workplace; however, institutional, cultural, and legal discrimination based on gender, race, religion, social status, and disability exists.

Women

According to the Family Development Center, the country's leading nongovernmental organization (NGO) on women's issues, violence against women is not widespread. Some foreign domestic servants, especially those from South Asia and the Philippines, have been mistreated by employers. In most cases, the mistreatment involves late or nonpayment of wages (see Section 6.c.), but also includes allegations of rape and physical abuse (see Section 6.e.). Foreign embassies provide shelter for maids who have left their employers as a result of abuse or disputes. According to Shari'a, all forms of physical abuse are illegal. The maximum penalty for rape is death. The police actively investigate reports of violence against women. In the last few years, the Government demonstrated an increased willingness to arrest and punish offenders, whether citizens or foreigners. Offenders who are citizens usually receive lighter punishments than do foreigners. Abused domestic workers usually do not press charges for fear of losing their jobs.

The legal system allows leniency for a man found guilty of committing a "crime of honor," a euphemism that refers to a violent assault against a woman for perceived immodesty or defiant behavior; however, such honor killings are rare. In 1999 a former minister and Gulf War hero, Ali Saeed Al-Khayareen, was accused of killing his two half-sisters for their alleged sexual misconduct. Al-Khayareen was held for a few months at the Al-Rayyan detention center, but eventually the women's family decided to accept monetary compensation, and he was released late in 1999.

The activities of women are restricted closely both by law and tradition. For example, a woman is prohibited from applying for a driver's license unless she has permission from a male guardian. This restriction does not apply to noncitizen women. The Government adheres to Shari'a as practiced in the country in matters of inheritance and child custody. Muslim wives have the right to inherit from their husbands. However, they inherit only one-half as much as male relatives. Non-Muslim wives inherit nothing, unless a special exception is arranged. In cases of divorce, Shari'a is followed; younger children remain with the mother and older children with the father. Both parents retain permanent rights of visitation. However, local authorities do not allow a noncitizen parent to take his or her child out of the country without permission of the citizen parent. Women may attend court proceedings but generally are represented by a male relative; however, women may represent themselves. According to Shari'a, the testimony of two women equals that of one man, but the courts routinely interpret this on a case-by-case basis.

Women largely are relegated to the roles of mother and homemaker, but some women are now finding jobs in education, medicine, and the news media. Women appear to receive equal pay for equal work; however, they often do not receive equal allowances. These allowances generally cover transportation and housing costs. Increasingly, women receive government scholarships to pursue degrees at universities overseas. The Amir has entrusted his second wife, who is the mother of the Heir Apparent, with the high-profile task of establishing a university in Doha. In 1996 the Government appointed its first female undersecretary, in the Ministry of Education, and in March a woman was appointed vice president of Qatar University. Although women legally are able to travel abroad alone (see Section 2.d.), tradition and social pressures cause most to travel with male escorts. There also have been complaints that citizen husbands take their foreign spouses' passports and, without prior approval, turn them in for Qatari citizenship documents. The husbands then inform their wives that the wives have lost their former citizenship. In other cases, foreign wives report being forbidden by their husbands or in-laws to visit or to contact foreign embassies.

There is no independent women's rights organization, nor has the Government permitted the establishment of one.

Children

The Government demonstrates its commitment to children's rights through a well-funded, free public education system (elementary through university) and a complete medical protection program for the children of citizens.

However, children of most foreigners are denied free education and have only limited medical coverage.

Very young children, usually of African or South Asian background, have been used as jockeys in camel races. Little information is available on wages and working conditions for these children (see Sections 6.c. and 6.d.).

There is no societal pattern of abuse of children.

People with Disabilities

The Government has not enacted legislation or otherwise mandated provision of accessibility for the disabled, who also face social discrimination. The Government maintains a hospital and schools that provide high-quality, free services to the mentally and physically disabled.

Religious Minorities

Shi'a Muslims fill many positions in the bureaucracy and are prominent in business. However, they experience discrimination in employment in some sensitive areas, such as security.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The Government discriminates against some citizens of non-Qatari origin. In the private sector, many citizens of Iranian origin occupy some of the highest positions. However, they rarely are found in senior decisionmaking positions in government.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The right of association is limited strictly, and all workers, including foreigners, are prohibited from forming labor unions. Despite this restriction, almost all workers have the right to strike after their case has been presented to the Labor Conciliation Board and ruled upon. Employers may close a place of work or dismiss employees once the Conciliation Board has heard the case. The right to strike does not exist for government employees, domestic workers, or members of the employer's family. No worker in a public utility or health or security service may strike if such a strike would harm the public or lead to property damage. Strikes by expatriate workers are rare but do occur. The Conciliation Board is widely perceived to be objective, particularly with regard to the most common complaints of expatriate workers, the nonpayment of wages, and poor living conditions. The press reports work actions and grievances over these issues.

The Labor Law provides for the establishment of joint consultative committees composed of representatives of the employer and workers. The committees do not discuss wages but may consider issues such as organization and productivity, conditions of employment, training of workers, and safety measures and their implementation.

Since 1995 the country has been suspended from the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) insurance programs because of the Government's lack of compliance with internationally recognized worker rights standards.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

Workers are prohibited from engaging in collective bargaining. In general wages are set unilaterally by employers without government involvement. Local courts handle disputes between workers and employers.

There are no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor. Three-quarters of the work force are foreign workers, who are dependent on a single employer for residency rights. This leaves them vulnerable to abuse. For instance, employers must give consent before exit permits are issued to any foreign employee seeking to leave the

country. Some employers temporarily withhold this consent to force foreign employees to work for longer periods than they wish. Some unskilled workers and domestic servants are vulnerable to late payment of wages; it is government policy to assist laborers, usually through the Labor Board, under such circumstances. The Government prohibits forced and bonded labor by children and generally enforces this prohibition effectively; however, some very young children work as jockeys in camel races (see Sections 5 and 6.d., 6.e., and 6.f.).

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

Minors between the ages of 15 and 18 may be employed with the approval of their parents or guardians and some children may work in small, family-owned businesses. However, child labor is rare. Education is compulsory for citizens through the age of 15. Very young children, usually of African or South Asian background, are used as jockeys in camel races (see Sections 5, 6.c., and 6.f.). Little information is available on wages and working conditions for these children. The Government prohibits forced and bonded labor by children and generally enforces this prohibition effectively with respect to citizen children (see Section 6.c.).

Minors may not work more than 6 hours a day or more than 36 hours a week. Employers must provide the Ministry of Labor with the names and occupations of their minor employees. The Ministry may prohibit the employment of minors in jobs that are judged dangerous to the health, safety, or morals of minors. Employers also must obtain permission from the Ministry of Education to hire a minor.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no minimum wage, although a 1962 law gives the Amir authority to set one. The average wage provides a decent standard of living for workers and their families. The law prescribes a 48-hour workweek with a 24-hour rest period, although most government offices follow a 36-hours-per-week work schedule. Employees who work more than 48 hours per week, or 36 hours per week during the Muslim month of Ramadan, are entitled to overtime pay. This law is adhered to in government offices and major private sector companies. It is not observed with respect to domestic and personal employees. Domestic servants frequently work 7 days per week, and more than 12 hours per day with few or no holidays, and have no effective way to redress grievances against their employers.

The Government has enacted regulations concerning worker safety and health, but enforcement, which is the responsibility of the Ministry of Energy and Industry, is lax. The Department of Public Safety oversees safety training and conditions, and the state-run petroleum company has its own set of safety standards and procedures. The Labor Law of 1964, as amended in 1984, lists partial and permanent disabilities for which compensation may be awarded, some connected with handling chemicals and petroleum products or construction injuries. The law does not specifically set rates of payment and compensation. Laborers who suffer work-related sickness or injuries receive free medical treatment provided by the Government.

Foreign workers may enter the country on a visitors visa and then convert this visa to a work visa once in the country. A sponsor is needed to convert a visitor's visa to a work visa, and the worker must have their sponsor's permission to depart the country. Any worker may seek legal relief from onerous work conditions, but domestic servants generally accept their situations in order to avoid repatriation. The Government also penalizes citizen employers who violate residence and sponsorship laws. Some foreign domestic servants have been mistreated by their employers. Such mistreatment normally involves the nonpayment or late payment of wages but also may involve rape and physical abuse (see Section 5). It is not known if workers have the right to remove themselves from hazardous work conditions without fear of dismissal.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits trafficking in persons.

On January 19, the Government arrested and repatriated several women from the former Soviet Union who were transported to the country to work as prostitutes.

Very young children, usually of African or South Asian background, have been used as jockeys in camel races (see Sections 5 and 6.d.).

[End.]

